

Tseycum First Nation and the Restoration of the Patricia Bay Watershed

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Tseycum First Nation people have lived on Patricia Bay, Saanich Inlet, for millennia. Historically, “Pat” Bay, having two salmon creeks, abundant bivalves, and access to other marine species, provided the Tseycum with food and other essentials. Over the last century, these resources have been extirpated or contaminated to the point where no legal bivalve harvests have occurred for over 15 years. Chief Vern Jacks has been a champion against the damaging effects of local pollution for over 20 years. The demise of shellfish harvesting due to pollution was predicted by Chief Jacks’ Grandmother in the 1950’s. Since 1997, many initiatives to improve the watersheds of Pat Bay have been lead or sponsored by Tseycum, using their Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a guide. This presentation provides an overview of the environmental impacts on Pat Bay as well as the research and restoration activities conducted since 1997 by Tseycum and a multitude of partners including GBEL, GBAP, Fisheries & Oceans Canada, Health Canada, local government, farmers and businesses. These projects include dairy farm stormwater treatment with constructed wetlands, a seafood consumption dietary study, marine and freshwater fecal coliform and nutrient testing, bacterial source tracking, shellfish contamination by Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), stream channel improvements, public education workshops, and public displays. Through his work with the Tseycum people, the author recognizes the need to understand and include the Saanich traditional stewardship methods of these resources and the importance of integrating Coast Salish knowledge in remediation and management.